

How to Achieve Your Career Goals

Welcome to *The Workforce Link Podcast*, where we're offering forward-thinking conversations for the workforce, linking employers and job seekers to a brighter tomorrow. I'm your host, Sundi Jo Graham, and I'm excited to be back for another podcast episode.

Today we're going to talk about one of my favorite things - goals. I'm a huge advocate for setting achievable goals in every area of our lives - financially, personally, physically, career, etc.

And though anytime is a good time to start achieving your career goals, what better way to get re-inspired than at the beginning of a new year?

No matter what role you're in or what industry you're in, it's important to set goals for your career. They keep us moving forward. They help us to get unstuck. They give us something to work towards.

So, we'll dive in today on how to set and achieve your career goals so you can go to the next level in this new year!

Let's get started.

Before we talk about setting our career goals, let's talk about what they are. Career goals describe what you want to do and how you plan to get there. Think of them as an agreement you make with yourself, a promise that you will do what you need to do to move forward in your career.

Having your career goals in front of you will help you see clearly where you want to be next year, in five years, ten years, etc. In addition, having them in front of you is a great reminder that you are in charge of making your future what you want it to be, and that's in every area of life, not just a career.

Maybe you have no clue what you want to do yet, or as I often say to clients, "what you want to be when you grow up." That's okay. Setting career goals can help you figure that out. Setting both short-term and long-term goals helps you have a clearer picture of where you're going. It helps you be specific.

Speaking of short-term and long-term goals, we're going to break those down together today because sometimes we can get caught up in dreaming about our future that it becomes so overwhelming we give up before we ever get started.

So, let's talk first about short-term goals.

Your short-term goals will help you work towards the bigger picture - towards the long-term goals. Sometimes we need to focus on the short-term career goals for a while before we can even begin taking action on the big, long-term goals. And that's okay.

Here are some examples of setting short-term career goals.

- 1) **Start with your paycheck.** Sounds silly and simple, right? But it's not. Sometimes the only thing you can focus on right now is making sure you have a steady income, and that's okay. Maybe you got laid off. Maybe you lost your job altogether. Maybe you're struggling to make ends meet.

Figure out what you need to do to provide for yourself and your family if you have one. Set a goal to earn a steady paycheck for a certain time (6 months, maybe).

It's hard to dream about what we want to do in the long term if we're struggling to put food on the table. Once you find more stability, you can think about the career you want to pursue and start moving toward it. You'll be able to think more clearly.

- 2) **Connecting with the right people.** There is power in networking. Making genuine connections is important, which is a great short-term goal that leads to the long-term. Making connections now leads to bigger and better job opportunities.

There are so many ways to network. Make a list of people you know. Ask your friends. This is where social media can be so great. You have the opportunity to meet so many people. We should probably do an episode on this.

- 3) **Start training, earn certifications, or go back to school.** Maybe there's a certain qualification you need for the career you want. Start working on it now.

Or maybe you need specific training to get into that career. Is there a company you can train with? The answer to that is actually yes. Our Job Centers offer on-the-job training to clients, which is great because we get to team you up with an employer who needs team members, and you get a paycheck while you get trained to do something you enjoy. I'll share the link to more information in the show notes.

Or maybe now is the time to start returning to school to learn more about the field you want to work in. Maybe an internship. Maybe just a specific course you want to take. Again, our Job Centers can help with that. We've sent clients back to school, provided paid internships, etc. Our goal is to remove every possible barrier to your career. We want you to be successful.

- 4) **Get clear on where you want to go in your career.** You can't set long-term career goals without clarifying where you want to go. Make it a short-term goal to figure out what you really want to do.

Maybe you're already in a long-term career, but you've decided you want to do

something different. Nothing wrong with that. Maybe this is the first time you're figuring out your career direction. That's okay, but now is the time to start honing in on what that looks like.

You can't achieve your goals without clarity; without clarity, you'll never move past dreaming about what you want to do. Spend time processing your talents, passions, and things like that. Do a career assessment. The State of Missouri offers Talify for free. You can get feedback on work-related strengths, career guidance, interview coaching, and more. It even helps you narrow down soft skills. I'll share the link in the show notes, or you can cwdregion.com/talify.

And there's also our ONET Interest profiler, which helps you find out your interests and how they relate to the world of work. You can find out what you like to do. I'll share the link in the show notes.

- 5) **Get started.** I know that may sound silly, but it's true. You have to start if you're going to be purposeful about getting on the career pathway you want and achieving your dreams. This could look different for everyone. Maybe it's a part-time job at an employer you really like. Maybe it's a side hustle doing something you love.

Start somewhere and work your way up. But the key is starting.

Do you want hands-on experience as you decide what career you want to pursue? Through on-the-job training, work experiences, and apprenticeships, Central Missouri Job Center staff are ready to help set you up for success today!

Learn more about our on-the-job training program, an excellent opportunity to get hands-on experience from an employer while earning a paycheck. It's a win-win for everyone. Employers get the workforce they need, and you get the experience you need!

Or there's our Work Experience Program, available to job seekers August 14-24 who have little or no past work experience. This provides the opportunity to meet with prospective employers while also taking advantage of critical workplace training. Gaining work experience gives you the needed work background to secure future jobs.

Our Registered Apprenticeship opportunities are an alternative-earn-while-learning combination of training and employment. Apprentice workers gradually earn more as they reach higher levels of productivity. A Registered Apprenticeship combines employer-driven, job-related instruction with extensive learning under the supervision of a trade professional. After completing a Registered Apprenticeship, the apprentice receives a nationally-recognized occupational credential that communicates the standards and high level of training that their employer provides.

To learn more about our work-based learning programs, visit cwdregion.com/learning today and find the Central Region Job Center near you!

And now... back to the show.

So, now let's talk about long-term career goals. Maybe you want to be known as an expert in your field. Maybe you want to be the President of a company. Maybe you want to branch out and start your own plumbing company. Maybe you want to be the lead nurse at the hospital. Whatever it is you want to do, you need to set some long-term goals to make sure you're on the right track to getting there.

Here are some examples of long-term goals you can pursue.

- 1) **Become a leader.** Sometimes I think we get this idea we have to be in some type of leadership role to be a leader. That's far from the truth. Great leadership can be a skill for anyone, whether in a leadership role or not.

Consider volunteering to lead a specific project at work. Then set a goal to lead a bigger project, or lead a team. It's going to take some hard work and the willingness to be teachable, but you can do it. And if being a leader isn't something you want, that's okay, too.

- 2) **Leave a legacy.** How will people remember you? How will the generations after you be impacted by your work? Leave an impact worth remembering. Leave something behind that continues to bring change. Maybe write a book. Leave an inheritance to your grandkids.

None of these things are beyond a possibility for you **IF** you start pursuing them today.

- 3) **Land your dream job.** This goal might be a few years away, and that's okay. But know what you want to do and make sure it's in front of you, so you keep pushing forward to land that dream job. But you need to be willing to do what it takes for however long it takes. So, ask yourself that question now... *Am I willing?*

And.. if you've been implementing some of the short-term goals we talked about, you're already working towards achieving this.

The examples I gave you for both short-term and long-term goals are certainly not an exhaustive list. These were just ideas to get you started.

Now that you have an idea of the goals you want to pursue and achieve let's work on making them even more specific. Setting S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goals will get you on the right track fast. I used to just focus on S.M.A.R.T. goals, but my friend and founder of *Full Focus*, which you hear me

talk about a lot on this podcast, introduced me to the S.M.A.R.T.E.R. framework in his *Best Year Ever* goal-setting course.

Let's break down what S.M.A.R.T.E.R goals are.

Hyatt says, "In my SMARTER version, goals must meet seven criteria." They must be:

- 1) **Specific**—your goals must identify exactly what you want to accomplish in as much specificity as you can muster.
- 2) **Measurable**—as the old adage says, "you can't manage what you can't measure." If possible, try to quantify the result. You want to know absolutely, positively whether or not you hit the goal.
- 3) **Actionable**—every goal should start with an action verb (e.g., "quit," "run," "finish," "eliminate," etc.) rather than a to-be verb (e.g., "am," "be," "have," etc.)
- 4) **Risky**—a good goal should stretch you, but not too much. I go right up to the edge of my comfort zone and then step over it. (If you're not out of your comfort zone, you're not thinking big enough.)
- 5) **Time-keyed**—every goal needs a date associated with it. When do you plan to deliver on that goal? It could be by year-end (December 31) or it could be more near-term (March 31). A goal without a date is just a dream. Make sure that every goal ends with a by when date.
- 6) **Exciting**—you should be personally excited about achieving the goal. If this isn't the case, then you likely won't have the motivation necessary to continue pursuing the goal when you encounter unexpected challenges—which you inevitably will.
- 7) **Relevant**—your goal should be relevant—or aligned with—your values, your season in life, and your other goals.

And I would add a couple more things...

- 1) **Make sure your goals are your own.** You don't want your boss's goals. You don't want your best friend's goals. You don't want your spouse's goals. You want yours! People will have a lot of ideas for what they think you should do and achieve, but make sure you have your own ideas.

It's much harder to devote your heart and time to achieving goals and dreams when they're not yours. That doesn't mean you can't hear suggestions, but at the end of the day make sure you're achieving what you believe you're supposed to be achieving.

- 2) **Write your goals down.** This is so important, I promise. When you write something down, you are stating your intention and setting things in motion.

Put them where you can see them. Don't just write them in your phone notes and never look at them again. Make sure they're in front of you at least once/day. And on those days when you're tired and don't want to keep going, get them out and look at them again as a reminder that you can do this.

I know it touched Hyatt's *Your Best Year Ever* goal-setting course, but I wanted to share just a bit more information with you because it truly is game-changing for not just your career-related dreams but any goals and dreams you want to accomplish in your life.

Most people begin each year with vague hopes for life change, so they end each year unsure of whether or not they accomplished anything and wondering, "What went wrong?"

The truth is, it's not their fault.

It's just that no one showed them how to use the science-based system to achieve goals at will.

Once you understand the system, achieving goals is a breeze. Every day, you'll make steady progress toward the life you want until you see it all around you.

That's what I love about the *Your Best Year Ever* goal-setting course. I've actually been setting goals through this process since 2015.

Here's what you'll learn:

1. How to create annual goals. This is where you'll learn how to use the SMARTER Goals® framework we talked about and other tools to increase your likelihood of achievement before you take any action.
2. How to position yourself for success. Here you'll learn the techniques you need to position yourself mentally, emotionally, and physically for success.
3. How to create habits that stick. Have you ever tried to form a new habit, only to fall off track after a few weeks? Here, you'll learn how to create and keep new habits, without willpower.
4. How to move from goal setting to goal achievement. Our goals tend to get lost in the busyness of life. In this section, you'll learn how to connect your big goals to daily action, so you consistently make progress without getting overwhelmed or side-tracked.
5. How to overcome obstacles to goal achievement. Regardless of what you're trying to achieve, obstacles are guaranteed. You'll learn how to overcome the predictable hurdles and get five strategies for getting back on track when your goals are hopelessly behind.

If you're interested in the Best Year Ever course, I will share the link in the show notes for you.

There is a lot of persistence needed when pursuing your career goals. Patience too. No matter how big or small the goal is, you need both. Keep going. You can do this!

If you've enjoyed today's episode, would you mind sharing it with someone else you think could benefit? Maybe a friend or co-worker who needs a little nudge in the right direction toward achieving his/her goals. Thanks in advance.

And if you need any assistance with learning about our on-the-job training, internship programs, strengths and career assessments, job search, etc., our Job Center staff would love to help. You can find the closest Job Center to you at cwdregion.com/jobcenters, and I'll share the link in the show notes.

Have a great week, my friend, and we'll meet again in the next episode. Until then. Remember this... There's always a brighter tomorrow if you're willing to find it.